

## Book Reviews

“reading” the body as well as the texts. Helen King examines how the healer could read the body and avoid being deceived by it, and what made reading a female body different. In Chapter 3, it is the case histories in the Hippocratic *Epidemics* that are subjected to scrutiny, with particular focus on one specific case of a girl who died after a nosebleed.

In Chapters 4 and 5, the author turns to Greek religion and myth again. In the former, she looks especially at the place of female puberty and of the *parthenos* in Hippocratic medicine, the importance of menarche and comparisons between menstruation and sacrificial bloodshed, as well as at the cult of Artemis. The fifth chapter discusses temple medicine as it appears to have been practised at the temples of Asclepius, and attempts to work out in what ways the female experience of this healing was different. (References to non-European cultures have become practically obligatory in classical scholarship. While, for example, Amazonian or Yoruba customs are fascinating in themselves, it is questionable whether they are a great help in understanding ancient beliefs.)

Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with drug therapy, focusing on pain and “contraception”, and 8 and 9 with the gender of those providing treatment and care for women. These last two chapters address the apparent absence of midwives and nurses in the Hippocratic texts and later attempts of these two professions to claim ancient origins. The two final chapters investigate the use—based on misuse or misunderstanding—of Hippocratic texts in later centuries for the construction of the disease entities chlorosis and hysteria.

If there is the occasional sense of *déjà vu*, this is not only because some of the material has been covered by Lesley Dean-Jones and Ann Ellis Hanson, but also because several chapters are updated versions of previously published material. This may explain the fact that the quote by

Seymour Haden about women patients being at the mercy of male doctors appears as an epigraph to the introduction as well as three more times in the text. It may, on the other hand, be a marker for the author’s programme, for this is a book with an axe to grind. Much of its argument is constructed on the framework of the use of medical theories and tradition by male doctors as a means of controlling their female patients. It seems a pity that the considerable scholarship that has gone into this monograph should not have resulted in a more even-handed account. (To give an example, to what extent was later misinterpretation of ancient texts the result of deliberate manipulation rather than insufficient scholarship?) Classicists will find the absence of any original texts and the use of the Loeb translations disappointing, but this appears to be a deliberate move in order to make *Hippocrates’ woman* accessible to a larger audience. It will nevertheless appeal to some medical historians and in particular to those with an interest in Women’s Studies.

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**Heikki Mikkeli**, *Hygiene in the early modern medical tradition*, Humaniora series no. 305, Helsinki, Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 1999, pp. 195 (951-41-0869-8). Distributor: Bookstore Tiedekirja, Kirkkokatu 14, 00170 Helsinki, Finland. Fax: +358 9 637.

This book surveys the status of hygiene in learned medicine in the period from the sixteenth-century rediscovery of the texts of the classical period until the emergence of public hygiene in the late eighteenth century. The main focus of hygienic literature was the management of the Galenic six things non-natural (air, exercise, diet, sleep, excretion and retention, passions

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of the mind). Mikkeli examines briefly the sixteenth-century popular health manuals of Sir Thomas Elyot and Luigi Cornaro, the attack on the inclusion of hygiene of Petrus Lauremburg in 1630, the initiative of Santoro Santorio to put hygiene on a mathematical and physical basis and its subsequent endorsement by the pioneering historian of medicine James Mackenzie, and finally the recognition of hygiene as an issue of state in the eighteenth century.

While the six things non-natural, along with the Hippocratic concern with regimen, were indisputably part of the classical medical heritage, renaissance and early modern commentators were not quite sure how to fit them into a system of medical knowledge. Mikkeli finds that while hygiene was recognized as one of five divisions of medicine at the beginning of the period, thereafter it was often relegated to subordinate status. There was confusion as to whether prevention of disease was distinct from cultivation of health. Some, like William Cullen, saw the latter as outside the territory of the physician; others felt the simultaneous optimization of the six things for each person's constitution to be an impossible task. There was also substantial disagreement about what the proper sort of regimen was, and what kind of physiological theory ought to be used to determine it.

This book makes a good start on an important subject of a history of health as distinct from that of disease. It is, however, narrowly, and somewhat idiosyncratically conceived. Being interested more in the acceptance of hygiene as a subject of medical knowledge, Mikkeli pays relatively little attention either to the content of hygienic knowledge or to the context in which ideas appeared and the uses made of them. While within an academic culture oriented toward disputation it is clear how such questions as the proper divisions of medicine and knowledge might arise, it is not at all clear what particular answers to these questions implied for medical teaching and

practice. The recognition of Santorio is certainly important—I am surprised how much he is referred to even in the nineteenth century—but others who were also important (e.g., J P Frank and Bernhard Faust) do not receive mention, and the discussion of Tissot is unduly brief. Also, some hygienic traditions, like the regimen of the spa, are not covered—primarily because of the narrow focus on academic medicine.

Mikkeli's work is a good departure point for an important set of studies and it is to be hoped that more work in this area will be forthcoming.

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**Margaret Pelling, *The common lot: sickness, medical occupations and the urban poor in early modern England*, Harlow, Addison Wesley Longman, 1998, pp. xiv, 270, £42.00 (hardback 0-582-23183-3); £14.99 (paperback 0-582-23182-5).**

Extensively revised, and collected together in a single volume, Margaret Pelling's essays represent her abiding interest to present the social history of medicine within its economic context. Largely, although not exclusively, drawn from her work in the 1980s, the essays focus upon the health concerns of non-élite groups of medical consumers and providers, particularly in early modern London and Norwich (where records are abundant), examine the extent and effect of the levelling nature of illness and disease, and address the social and economic implications "about cures and practitioners [that] ramified across divisions of gender and class". The studies represent and reflect issues in the history of medicine which are now of increasing interest to students of early modern medical politics and which integrate important economic issues that informed medical provision and